

2020

# FACT SHEET: REFORMING BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

## STATUS OF

## EDUCATION

## IN NIGERIA

Nigeria accounts for 45% of the growing number of out-of-school children in West Africa.<sup>1</sup> The number of out-of-school children is highly contested - with data ranging from 13.2 million to 10.2 million out-of-school children at the primary level.<sup>2</sup> The issue, however, is likely to be much greater as the government does not collect and report on the number of out-of-school children at upper secondary school age. The true size of the education crisis in Nigeria is therefore unknown.

School-age children in northern Nigeria face the biggest challenges accessing education, with the northern states accounting for 69% of all out-of-school children.<sup>3,4</sup>

### Girls across Nigeria are disproportionately affected:

**60%**

of all out-of-school children at primary level are girls.<sup>5</sup>

**30%**

30% of girls aged 9-12 have never been to school at all.<sup>6</sup>

**1:12**

A rich urban boy can expect to receive, on average, 12 years of education, while a poor rural girl will only stay in school for one year.<sup>7</sup>

The lack of accurate data on out-of-school children of all ages, coupled with outdated national legislation and insufficient financing for education remain the primary bottlenecks for Nigeria's education ambitions.



## THE OPPORTUNITY: BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN EDUCATION



Education - particularly girls' secondary education - is one of the best investments in:



### A Healthier Workforce

- ▶ Women with post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to be educated about the risk of HIV/AIDS and know how to protect and prevent sexually transmitted infections.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Every additional year of school a girl completes cuts rates of infant mortality by 5 to 10%.<sup>9</sup> If all girls received 12 years of education, the frequency of early births would drop by 59% and child deaths would decrease by 49%.<sup>10</sup>



### Economic Growth

- ▶ Education - particularly secondary education - is the most effective way to develop the skills needed for work and life, making it the best investment to expand prospects of skilled and adequately paid employment.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Earnings increase by approximately 8-10% for each additional year of schooling (with larger increases for women)<sup>12</sup> and if every child completed 12 years of education, the number of people living in poverty would be reduced by more than half.<sup>13</sup> Education is therefore critical for achieving the government's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan.
- ▶ A dollar invested in an additional year of schooling, particularly for girls, generates earnings and health benefits of \$4 dollars in middle income countries like Nigeria.<sup>14</sup>



### Peace & Prosperity in Nigeria

- ▶ In a country with high youth to adult population ratios, like Nigeria, doubling the percentage of students finishing secondary school would halve the risk of conflict and insurgencies.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ Studies suggest that each year of education reduces the risk of conflict by around 20%.<sup>16</sup> Investing in girls' education can be particularly transformative. Studies have shown that achieving gender equality in education decreases the likelihood of conflict by as much as 37%.<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ Education can strengthen children's resilience to withstand situations of crisis and conflict. Schools can be an important sanctuary for children, shielding them against the harmful impacts of conflict, and helping them to overcome trauma.<sup>18</sup>





## THE CHALLENGE: BARRIERS TO PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSALISATION



To unlock the catalytic benefits of education, the government must make progressive amendments to enhance the right to education and financing to education to ensure that this right can be realised.

### 1 LIMITATIONS TO THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION:

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004 establishes the right of children at primary and junior secondary school levels to free, universal, basic education. It defines basic education as a full nine years of formal schooling. This parameter excludes secondary school children aged between 15 and 18 years, leaving many children, and girls in particular, without the education they need to build a better future for their families, communities and country.

Ensuring that all children, particularly those most vulnerable and marginalised, have **access to 12 years of safe, free quality education** is critical for Nigeria to meet its global and regional commitments to education, as a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union Agenda 2063.

Many countries in the continent are revising their legislation to expand the scope of free and compulsory education to include senior secondary. In Malawi, the Education Act 2012 provides free and compulsory education for primary school education, but it covers up to the age of 17. Kenya's Basic Education Act 2013 redefines 'basic education' and has provisions for the right to free and compulsory education from pre-primary up to senior secondary education. It also covers continuous adult education.

### 2 INSUFFICIENT FINANCING AND COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION:

While State Governments' budgets for education are largely poor and opaque, the National budget of the Federal Government for education has been trending downward for the last few years. The percentage of the federal budget allocated to education has periodically decreased from 7.4% in 2017 to 6.7% in 2020.<sup>19 20</sup> This is far from the global target of allocating 20% of government budgets to education. Meeting this global benchmark will be critical for addressing the country's education crisis and would require a significant turnaround from the country's historically low level of federal financing for education.

While the financing of basic education is the shared responsibility of the states and local governments, the federal government contributes 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) to support the implementation of the UBE Act.<sup>21</sup> Secondary education is, however, the responsibility of all levels of government. If the right to education were to be enhanced to align with global commitments, there is currently no fund that covers the senior secondary education nor any existing constitutional financing provision to guarantee its delivery of free senior secondary education.

The right to education must be amended and legislative provisions made for funding secondary education. Nevertheless the current CRF allocation will be insufficient for the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to be able to take on the added responsibility of senior secondary. Without enhancing funding for education it could risk diminishing quality and standards of primary and junior secondary.

States budgets for education are often insufficient. States have underutilised the intervention fund for UBE, which is seldom accessed by many states, who would only have had to contribute a 50% counterpart funding to access the funds. In 2016, only three out of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, provided the matching grant to access the funds, compared to 19 States in 2015.<sup>22</sup> As of July 22, 2019, about 51.6 Billion Naira of the UBE intervention funds remain unaccessed at UBEC.<sup>23</sup>



#### REGIONAL AND GLOBAL EDUCATION COMMITMENTS



**Sustainable Development Goal 4 -**  
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality  
education and promote lifelong  
learning opportunities for all by 2030.



**African Union Agenda 2063:  
The Africa We Want -**  
Expand universal access to quality early  
childhood, primary and secondary  
education and expand and consolidate  
gender parity in education.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## EXTEND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION:

• **Redefine basic education** - The government should **amend the UBE Act** to redefine 'basic education' to cover up to 12 years of education. This would position Nigeria among other African countries like Kenya and Malawi that have taken steps to align their legislation to commitments in SDGs Goal 4 and the African Union Agenda 2063.



## IMPROVE MEASUREMENTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN:

• **Identify the true scale of the issue** - Given the wide range of conflicting data on out-of-school children at primary level in Nigeria, the government should take steps to gather more accurate data on the scale of the issue. This consensus is critical to be able to accurately plan for how to improve access to, and the quality of, education in Nigeria.

• **Measure out-of-school children at secondary level** - There is a critical need to measure and publish the number of out-of-school children of secondary level that is disaggregated by gender. This will enable Nigeria to have a more comprehensive view of the education challenges and be able to use this information to plan appropriate measures to ensure all children have access to 12 years of safe, free, quality education.



## MORE AND BETTER FINANCING FOR EDUCATION:

• **Increase the Consolidated Revenue Fund to between 3-5%** - Extending the right to education to those up to 18 years will re-

quire expanding the proportion of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) that is allocation to education. This additional funding is integral to ensure that the UBE Commission can take on the responsibility of senior secondary without diminishing quality and standards of primary and junior secondary.

• **Adopt a progressive universalism approach** - To make 12 years of education for all a reality and achieve the leave no-one behind agenda of the SDGs we must focus on the (mostly poor and rural) girls who either fail to enter school, or who drop out before completing primary, and will therefore not benefit from expanded provision of schooling at secondary level at this time. It is therefore important for Nigeria to prioritise these groups when allocating scarce resources. This implies initially focusing public funding to the lower levels of the education system, and, within that, to those left behind because of poverty, disability, and social disadvantage.<sup>24</sup> This should be supplemented by efforts to help marginalised girls overcome the barriers to education that occur during adolescence, through provision of targeted financial and in-kind support, helping such girls to access secondary education.

• **Expand the sources of funding for education** - In addition to increasing the allocation of CRF to education, Nigeria needs to urgently increase domestic resource mobilisation for education by increasing its tax effort and prioritising education appropriately in national and state budgets in line with global benchmarks.

• **Ensure funding is strategically targeted** - The federal government should consider using equity-based funding formulas to ensure that more funding is targeted to poorer States and districts.

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